

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEGUCI 01433 041444Z

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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R 041347Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6729

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 1433

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: LIBERAL PARTY CONVENTION

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE LIBERAL PARTY CONVENTION PRESENTLY IN SESSION IS DOMINATED BY THE FORCES OF MODESTO RODAS ALVARADO. RODAS STATED TO AN EMBOFF THAT HIS POLICY WOULD BE ONE OF COMPLETE OPPOSITION TO THE LOPEZ REGIME. RODAS' CONTROL OF THE LIBERAL PARTY ADDS ANOTHER ELEMENT TO THE GROWING RIGHTEST OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE LIBERAL PARTY CONVENTION STARTED APRIL 1 AND WILL CONTINUE THROUGH APRIL 4. WHILE CONVENTION STILL IN SESSION, PRELIMINARY VOTES INDICATE THAT THE FORCES OF MODESTO RODAS ALVARADO ARE IN THE MAJORITY. THE RODISTAS WERE ABLE TO ELECT THE PROVISIONAL OFFICERS OF THE CONVENTION ON APRIL 1 AND ELECTED RODAS CONVENTION PGBSIDENT ON APRIL 2 BY A 162 TO 110 VOTE.

2. THE "DEMOCRATIC LEFT" OF CARLOS ROBERTO REINA AND SUPPORTERS OF 1971 LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JORGE
CONFIDENTIAL
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PAGE 02 TEGUCI 01433 041444Z

BUESO ARIAS WERE SURPRISED BY THE SHOWING OF THE RODAS FORCES. THEY HAD WON MOST OF THE ELECTIONS AT DEPARTMENTAL

LEVEL PRIOR TO THE CONVENTION AND HAD BEEN COUNTRING ON THOSE DELEGATES TO WIN THE CONVENTION. HOWEVER, THE EXPECTED DELEGATE STRENGTH DID NOT MATERIALIZE.

3. THE CONVENTION HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY UNBRIDLED VERBAL ATTACKS BY RODISTAS ON THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT AND VICE VERSA. THE VERBAL FIREWORKS OFTEN DEGENERATED INTO FISTFIGHTS ON THE FLOOR OF THE CONVENTION AND IN AREAS SURROUNDING THE MOVIE THEATER WHERE IT IS TAKING PLACE. REINA AND BUESO LED THEIR FOLLOWERS OUT OF THE CONVENTION ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 2 AS A SYMBOLIC PROTEST AT WHAT THEY TERMED THE STEAM-ROLLER TACTICS OF THE RODISTA FORCES. THEY SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WOULD RETURN TO THE CONVENTION TO CONSIDER STATUTE CHANGES AND THE ELECTION OF A NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

4. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF DURING CONVENTION, REINA SAID THAT RODAS OWED HIS ELECTION TO THE BRIBERY OF SOME DELEGATES AND TO THE DECISION OF SOME DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES TO THROW THEIR SUPPORT TO RODAS BECAUSE OF HIS ALL-OUT OPPOSITION TO AGRARIAN REFORM. REINA EMPHASIZED THAT RODAS' VICTORY IS A 10 YEAR LEAP INTO THE PAST AND A TRAGEDY FOR THE PARTY AND THE COUNTRY. RODAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE PARTY WOULD NOW BE IN A POSITION OF DETERMINED OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT. HE REMARKED THAT EVEN THOUGH HE HAD BEEN THE TARGET OF A COUP IN 1963 HE HAD RECENTLY DEVELOPED GOOD TIES WITH THE MILITARY AND HAD NO FEARS ON THAT SCORE. HE SAID THAT THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT IS VISIBLY CRUMBLING AND THAT ITS FALL IS NOT FAR IN THE FUTURE. HE OBSERVED THAT RECENT CAMPESINO ORGANIZATION THREATS TO TAKE OVER HIS LAND HAD HELPED HIM GREATLY IN OBTAINING MONETARY AND DELEGATE SUPPORT.

5. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT RODAS' OPPOSITION TO AGRARIAN REFORM APPEALED TO MANY MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEES, MANY OF WHOM ARE LANDOWNERS OR ASSOCIATED WITH LANDOWNERS. REINA AND THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT' MODERATE POSITION DID NOT APPEAL TO THAT GROUP, WITH A CONSEQUENT LOSS OF DELEGATE STRENGTH. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BRIBERY AT THE DELEGATE AND DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE LEVELS DID OCCUR, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW
CONFIDENTIAL
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PAGE 03 TEGUCI 01433 041444Z

OF THE FACT THAT DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEES ELECTED UNDER THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT LABEL NAMED DELEGATES WHO WERE PRO-RODAS. FURTHERMORE, IN CERTAIN CASES, DELEGATES WHO HAD PLEDGED THEMSELVES TO REINA VOTED FOR RODAS AT THE CONVENTION.

6. THE VIRTUAL ELECTION OF RODAS AS LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY ADDS ANOTHER ELEMENT TO THE GROWING RIGHTIST OPPOSITION TO THE LOPEZ REGIME. WHILE THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT REPEATEDLY CALLED FOR A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY IT HAD STATED THAT IT WAS NOT OPPOSED TO THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN. RODAS,

ON THE OTHER HAND, PUBLICLY REJECTED ACCEPTANCE OF REFORMS ENVISIONED IN THE PLAN AND CONCENTRATED HIS FIRE ON AGRARIAN REFORM PROPOSALS. RODAS' VICTORY IN THE CONVENTION ADDS THE LIBERAL PARTY TO THE LIST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S FOES THAT INCLUDES RICARDO ZUNIGA'S NATIONALISTS, CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS WELL AS THEIR PRESS ALLIES. THE EVENTUAL HOPE OF MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP IS TO GENERATE A COUP AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AMONG MEMBERS OF THE OFFICER CORPS WHO ARE (1) WORRIED ABOUT THE REGIME'S POLICIES AND (2) DESIROUS OF ADVANCING THEIR OWN AMBITIONS.
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